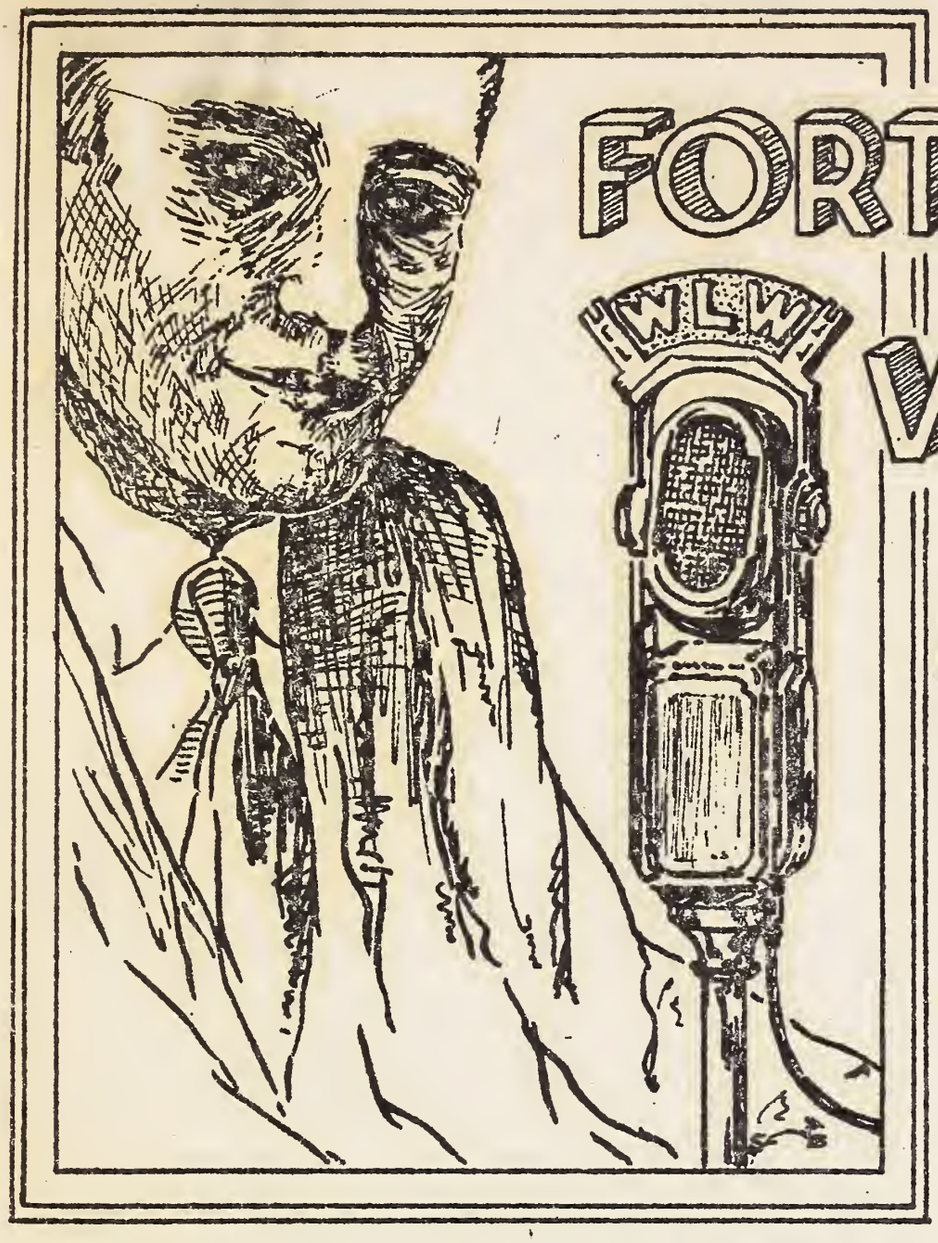

FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

A Series of Dramatizations of Better Land Use

No. 130 October 19, 1940 1:15 p.m.

"MAYVILLE TEACHES CONSERVATION"

W·L·W CINCINNATI

United States Department of Agriculture
Soil Conservation Service
Dayton · Ohio

SOUND: Thunder and rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

Long, long ago, as the icy glaciers from the north retreated, they left Lake Agassiz. Now in its place, each year there is a vast sea of ripening wheat. This is North Dakota, land of yellow grain and tinted rock. North Dakota, the "flickertail" state, has the level valley floor of the Red River, a drift plain with many a sag and swale, the Missouri plateau, petrified forests and badlands. Probably no other state in the Union depends upon agriculture as a means of livelihood so much as North Dakota--an agricultural state.

ORGAN: CONSERVATION

ANNOUNCER

Near the Minnesota line, midway between Grand Forks and Fargo, lies the little town of Mayville, home of Mayville State Teachers' College, home of a great pioneering experiment in conservation education. Mayville College is a small institution, no more than 400 students, but it is headed by a man with a vision...a vision of service to his people. He is President Cyril Grace. He regards his school as a profession school, training young men and women to take leadership in bringing a fuller life to their communities. He believes...(FADE)

GRACE

I believe conservation is thrift...thrift in the use of one's resources. It is something that should be taught early in a child's life, for he is tomorrow's citizen. Conservation is not a mechanical thing. It is a mode of life, a philosophy. And conservation in its true sense will result only from fundamental education, education which brings to the child an understanding of his community, its resources, its beauties, its opportunities for life and living. Our classes teach in terms of the environment in which the students are likely to carry on their work. Take Dr. Meyer's art class on a field trip, for example...(FADE).

SOUND: Occasional shouts of young men and women...

MEYERS

All right, students, we'll stop here. I want you to sketch this scene.

SOUND: Voices gradually subside...

MISS SWANSON

Goodness! Look at the dust the wind's whipping up from that plowed field. I hope it doesn't come our way.

STUDENT

I don't think the wind will swing enough for that.

MISS SWANSON

I surely hope not.

MEYERS

All right, now since you've noticed that dust blowing, I want to call your attention to the fields on the other side of the road. No dust is blowing there. Can you tell me why, Bernice?

MISS SWANSON

Well, I don't know, unless it's because there isn't so much plowed ground.

MEYERS

There's less plowed ground, all right, but that's not the real reason.

STUDENT (off)

It isn't?

MEYERS

The reason is that there are strips of growing crops between the plowed strips, and the wind can't get at the plowed fields.

MISS SWANSON

Oh, then by plowing in strips the farmers can keep the dirt from blowing away.

MEYERS

And from washing away. And it isn't dirt, it's soil.

MISS SWANSON

Is that what you want us to show in the drawing?

MEYERS

I want you to draw what you see. But since you've mentioned the dust blowing, let's take a few minutes to see some other things.

STUDENT

Golly, that field isn't only blowing away, it's been washed, too. See those little gullies?

MEYERS

Yes, it does appear that the water has washed some soil away. But look at the contour stripped fields. No evidence of water damage is visible. There's a real soil conservation lesson in this scene.

MISS SWANSON

Yes, there is. I see it now. And there are trees for the birds. I think I understand how drawing pictures of one's own country can make us see how conservation is a part of every day work. It seems to bob up in everything we do.

MEYERS

It seems that way to me, too. All right, students, begin sketching.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE, fading...

GRACE

But educational processes do not spring up spontaneously. They develop slowly. First must come the development of a sound philosophy in the teacher-training institutions, reached when the instructional staff has gone out onto the ground to find out the problems and needs of the people. A sound philosophy dictates the training of teachers-to-be, who in turn need to understand the philosophy so that their course will be true...that they will make conservation a real thing to the child. And Bernice Swanson is a teacher in her own right, now...at Viking School Number 5. Her first-grade pupils....

SOUND: Mumbling of voices, subsiding as teacher raps...

MISS SWANSON

Now, children....John, what did you notice when you came to school this morning?

JOHN

The blackboard needs washing!

SOUND: Laughter of children, subsiding....

MISS SWANSON

And if you're not careful, young man, you'll wash it--after school.

SOUND: Slight laughter of children...

MISS SWANSON

What did you notice about the country?

JOHN

Well, I was by Mr. Jones' farm and he was plowing. I saw the wind carrying a lot of dirt away.

MISS SWANSON

Soil, John, not dirt. Was he the only one you saw plowing?

JOHN

No, mam. Mr. Burkhart was plowing, too, but he used some kind of a plow that didn't turn the dirt...I mean soil, over...

MISS SWANSON

That was a disk plow. It leaves the stubble on the ground surface to prevent wind erosion.

JOHN

Anyhow, the soil didn't blow. And you know those bushes he planted around his pond? Well, I saw lots of birds there.

MISS SWANSON

You like birds, don't you.

JOHN

Yes, mam.

MISS SWANSON

I do, too.

JOHN

My dad says they eat lots of grasshoppers and birds help him a lot.

MISS SWANSON

And when you grow up, I hope you'll have birds around to help you, too.

ORGAN: BRIEF BRIDGE, fading...

GRACE

Soil conservation is basic and essential to the general welfare of the agricultural population of America. And the child should first learn conservation in terms of the environment with which he is familiar. The subject is not something to be set aside as a special course, but should be a part of every subject the child studies. The years roll by, and in Miss Swanson's fifth grade geography class....

SOUND: Mumbling of voices, subsiding...

MISS SWANSON

Well, children, we've talked about deserts and why they are different from North Dakota. John tried an experiment to show us why deserts are barren. What did you find out, John?

JOHN

Well, I planted some grass seed in a can of pretty sandy soil, a can of clay, and a can of black soil that I took from my dad's farm.

MISS SWANSON

And you treated them all the same?

JOHN

Yes, mam, I did. I planted the same amount of seed in each can and watered them exactly the same. Hardly any grew in the can of sandy soil, and only a little more grew in the clay. The grass in the other can grew like everything, and now it's just like the sod in dad's pasture.

MISS SWANSON

Tell the class why that happened.

JOHN

Well, the county agent was out to our place and I asked him. He told me there just wasn't very much food for the plants in the sand, and the sticky clay didn't have much more. The other soil, he said, was full of decayed plant roots and other organic matter that made it fertile. He said the good soil is black and soft, and breaks easy.

MISS SWANSON

Did the county agent tell you how the deserts are formed?

JOHN

Yes, mam. I asked him that too. He said that some of the places that are deserts now were fertile once upon a time, but that the wind blew out the rich soil, or water washed it away. The rich soil is light and goes first, he said, and if they had stopped erosion before it was too late most of those man-made deserts would still be farm land.

MISS SWANSON

That's an excellent report, John...and the county agent certainly was right. Tomorrow we're going to hear about Richard's experiment with two model farms, and how one farm...but that's his story, so I'll wait and let him tell it. And in the meantime...I want each of you to remember that those deserts were once rich land such as we have around here--but the people who lived there let the wind and water steal their soil.

ORGAN: Sneak in CONSERVATION

GRACE

The attention of the Nation is now focussed on national defense. We have firmly rededicated ourselves to the problem of preserving, for ourselves and posterity, the heritage of democracy. We should not lose sight of the fact that the roots of democracy are in the soil; and that the spiritual strength of a strong agrarian commonwealth will ensure us our democracy. To safeguard for the Nation a hardy rural life, and hence democracy, education must devote itself increasingly to the development of the rural community. Any school curriculum that fails to develop love of home, love of farm or village or community, and which largely develops dissatisfaction with the home environment, is dangerous to national welfare. We must educate--that we may safeguard our soil.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

That is the true story of how, in the rural schools of North Dakota, the lessons of conservation are step by step being brought to the children. And now, once again we turn to the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and here is Ewing Jones.

JONES

Thanks, _____. And that's how one small college, with a staff of far-sighted and enthusiastic instructors are bringing education to bear for conservation, showing the men of the land the beauties and opportunities that rest there.

ANNOUNCER

Say, Ewing, you were born out west there someplace--was it in North Dakota?

JONES

No, it was Oklahoma, _____, but I'm proud of The Mayville State Teachers' College just the same and I have a special salute for President Cyril Grace, and also for Professor Ellen V. Johnson, who directs a large part of the conservation education program. They've been working with Arthur W. Emerson and others of the Soil Conservation Service, and they've made wonderful forward strides in just a short while.

ANNOUNCER

I should think that teachers in other parts of the country would like to know more about their curriculum, Ewing....are there any publications available on this subject?

JONES

Educators in other states are getting busy, too, _____, and I'm going to get to that in just a moment. But as to publications, the Mayville State Teachers' College, in cooperation with the North Dakota State Extension Service and the Soil Conservation Service, have published a bulletin, "Youth and the Soil." It's a unit prepared especially for schools, and you know the answer...

ANNOUNCER

I think I do. Friends, if you would like a copy of the bulletin, "Youth and the Soil", send a letter or penny postcard to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio.

JONES

And that bulletin, "Youth and the Soil" contains a copy of the song, "Conservation" that was played on today's dramatization, and it contains lesson plans for just about every school grade. It's invaluable for teachers.

ANNOUNCER

And now, Ewing...how about those other states you referred to?

JONES

Practically every state is doing something along the line of soil conservation education, but for example, there's the Tar Hollow conservation laboratory held in the Ross-Hocking State Forest near Chillicothe, Ohio, this summer. Ollie Fink was director of the laboratory, and he had a "faculty" composed of such men as Dr. Dwight Moore, Dr. Lawrence Hicks, Prof. C. F. Moses, and Dr. A. C. Bunce. Then he had a score or more of outstanding educators and conservationists who acted as "guest speakers".

ANNOUNCER

Were these classes composed of school children?

JONES

Oh, no...they were teachers, or undergraduate teacher-trainees, who obtained full collegiate credit for their work. They got right down on the land, and studied land-use and conservation-farming maps. They walked across each field, studying them as they went along. These teachers saw things and learned to understand things that they have been stepping on all their lives, without ever seeing. And instead of 50 more people who now have a better understanding of conservation, we will have a thousand...because each teacher will reach a score of youngsters, and then another score, and then another.

ANNOUNCER

I'd call that a real public-education program.

JONES

It's even more. It's designed to make the merchant, the banker, and the manufacturer all learn the meaning of soil conservation. One of the quickest ways to achieve this goal is to teach the banker's little girl and the manufacturer's growing son. I wish we had time to talk about the fine work being done in other states, but we haven't. But just remember, _____, we have a conservation problem today, and we'll have one tomorrow. The way to solve tomorrow's problem is to teach the Americans of tomorrow that conservation is a part of their basic education---a part of their very life.

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

JONES (on cue)

And if you want a copy of the bulletin, "Youth and the Soil", just write to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. A penny postcard will do. This is Ewing Jones speaking for the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture...and goodbye until next week, when we bring you a story from the hills of Belmont County, Ohio...another chapter of "Fortunes Washed Away."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

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